Does Boreal Partners in Flight need an annual "Project Summary??" and other ramblings of a co-chair

Christopher M. Harwood
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Boreal Partners in Flight Annual Meeting
December 9, 2004

BPIF 101: BPIF Objectives

- establish statewide bird inventory and monitoring programs
- conduct research on factors affecting the status of northern populations
- provide information about birds to land managers in Alaska
- educate the public about the conservation of birds and their habitats
- share information about our birds with people who live where our birds migrate and winter

BPIF Objective #1

- establish statewide bird inventory and monitoring programs

- …we expend much of our effort on these two tasks and do a decent job with each (in my opinion...speak up if you disagree)…

BPIF Objective #2

- conduct research on factors affecting the status of northern populations

- …I think we'd all agree we need to do a better job with this (do "Species at Risk" poster children ring a bell?)…
- …or if it's being done, we don't know about it !!!

BPIF Objective #3

- provide information about birds to land managers in Alaska

- …clearly you need results from #1 and #2 to report to land managers...
- …but we certainly could improve here in all respects (e.g., rationale, content, timeliness, presentation, etc. [see monitoring framework document])…

BPIF Objective #4

- educate the public about the conservation of birds and their habitats

- …this cannot be the sole responsibility of our education coordinator, nor can we use the new standby, “it’s all there on the website- just go to www.johnkerry.com”…

BPIF Objective #5

- share information about our birds with people who live where our birds migrate and winter

- …was it just yesterday that I shared info on Blackpoll Warblers with an ornithologist from Amazonia??? No??? Oh that's right, it was never…
- …we can improve here…

BPIF/Harwood Objectives #6 & #7

- Better inform our membership and others who is doing what currently with respect to landbird conservation and research
- Better inform our membership and others what our information needs are and foster research to address those needs

3 of the 5 BPIF objectives (plus my 2!) deal with providing information, so…

What are the major current BPIF tools for informing folks what we are doing and what we need done?

- Annual Report
- Website

What does the Annual Report generally include?

- Annual meeting agenda
- Annual meeting minutes (includes copious notes on discussions)
- Announcements (e.g., PIF news)
- Some presentations from annual meeting
- Extensive summaries of regional programs like BBS, ORPC, ALMS, Migration monitoring, MAPS

RAPTORS

- Summary of Raptor surveys in Alaska, 2003
- Owl monitoring group update

INVENTORY AND MONITORING

- Evaluating the first ten years of MAPS program in Alaska and adjacent Canada
- Migration monitoring activities in Alaska, 2003
- Bird Banding Activities, 2003
- North American Breeding Bird Survey, 2003
- Alaska Landbird Monitoring Survey and Alaska Off-road Breeding Bird Survey, 2003
- Effects of forested buffer width on breeding bird communities in coastal forests of southeast Alaska with a comparison of avian sampling techniques
- Developing a long-term ecological monitoring program to detect changes in the distribution and abundance of passerines in Denali NPP
- Distribution, abundance, and habitat associations of birds along major mainland rivers of southeastern Alaska
- Waterbird and breeding landbird inventories at Klondike Gold Rush Natl. Hist. Park

BIRD CONSERVATION

- Species at Risk! A Poster Series for the 10th Alaska Bird Conference
- Species at Risk! – Solitary Sandpiper (*Tringa solitaria*)
- Species at Risk! – Olive-sided Flycatcher (*Contopus cooperi*)
- Species at Risk! – Blackpoll Warbler (*Dendroica striata*)
- Species at Risk! – Smith's Longspur (*Calcarius pictus*)
- Species at Risk! – Rusty Blackbird (*Euphagus carolinus*)
- Bird Conservation Regional updates

What does the website include?

Lots…but in particular, it has a project directory!!

USGS
science for a changing world

Other Boreal Partners in Flight Monitoring and Research Projects in Alaska

	PROJECT TITLE	REGION	CONTACT	FULL LISTING
1	Avian Nesting Biology in Northern Forests	Southeastern	Mary Willson	more info
2	Bird Surveys on Research Natural Areas on the Tongass National Forest	Southeastern	Brad Andres	more info
3	Birds of Alaska	Alaska	Brina Kessel	more info
4	Birds of Cape Romanzof	Western	Brian McCaffery	more info
5	Birds of Upper Cook Inlet, Alaska	Southcoastal	Thede Tobish	more info
6	Breeding Biology and Nesting Success of the Yellow Warbler at Canvasback Lake	Central	Kristine Sowl	more info
7	Breeding Bird Atlas of Fort Richardson	Southcoastal	Brad Andres	more info
8	Breeding Bird Density and Species Diversity in Relation to Primary Productivity in the Tanana River Floodplain	Central	Ann Johnson	more info
9	Breeding Bird Inventories on Local Training Areas of the Alaska Army National Guard	Alaska	Brad Andres	more info
10	Bufflehead Landbird Disturbance Study: Effects of Road Construction on Forest Bird Communities	Southcoastal	Todd Eskelin	more info
11	Community and Population Dynamics of Boreal Forest Birds: Effects of a Spruce Beetle Infestation in the Copper River Basin, Alaska	Central	Steve Matsuoka	more info
12	Daily Bird Checklist for the Upper Tanana Valley, Alaska	Central	Terry Doyle	more info
13	Dippers Feeding on Salmon Eggs	Southeastern	Mary Willson	more info

13	Dippers Feeding on Salmon Eggs	Southeastern	Mary Willson	more info
14	Effects of Fire on Landbird Communities on the Tetlin National Wildlife Refuge, Alaska	Central	Terry Doyle	more info
15	Fairbanks Feeder Count	Central	John Wright	more info
16	Habitat Selection and Reproductive Ecology among Townsend's Warblers in Southcentral Alaska	Southcoastal	Steve Matsuoka	more info
17	Habitat Selection by Passerine Birds in Forest and Shrub Wetlands, Fairbanks, Alaska	Central	Philip Martin	more info
18	Landcover Classification of the National Petroleum Reserve, Alaska	Northern	Dave Yokel	more info
19	Olive-sided Flycatcher Study	Central	John Wright	more info
20	Optimal Sampling Design for Monitoring Trends of Alaska Lanbirds	Alaska	Colleen Handel	more info
21	Osprey Monitoring	Central & Southcoastal	Jeffrey Hughes	more info
22	Peregrine Falcon Population Monitoring	Central, Western, & Northern	John Wright	more info
23	Raptor Nest Occupancy and Productivity in the Upper Tanana Valley, Alaska	Central	Terry Doyle	more info
24	The Role of Spruce Beetles and Subsequent Salvage Logging on Boreal Forest Breeding Bird Community Dynamics	Southcoastal	Todd Trapp	more info
25	Status of Bird and Vegetation Communities on Mined and Unmined Riparian Corridors	Central	Anne Morkill	more info
26	Status of the Timberline Sparrow (*Spizella breweri taverneri*) in Alaska	Central	Terry Doyle	more info
27	A Study of Riparian Breeding Birds on Streams With and Without Anadromous Fish Runs	Southeastern	Mary Willson	more info

Did you check the names of the PIs for those projects??

- Did I see Gabrielson and Lincoln were doing a project on Traill's Flycatcher??!!!
- Who the heck are Andres and Doyle??

- …clearly it's outdated, but it does show the variety of work being done ca. 1998…it might even accurately reflect most of the work being done beyond the big cooperative programs (e.g., BBS, MAPS)

Alaska Shorebird Group has an up-to-date Project Summary

- Unlike this presentation…
- The 2004 report even has color cover!!

Summaries of ongoing or new studies of Alaska shorebirds during 2003

March 2004

Compiled and edited by Bob Gill for the Alaska Shorebird Group. Anyone wanting additional information about these studies should contact the individual(s) noted at the end of each project summary.

Shorebird Highlights

- 34 projects / 56 investigators
- Of 56 investigators:
  - 52% - govt. resource agencies
  - 30% - universities (11 univs. Represented!!)
  - 13% - NGOs
  - Also industry, Native corporations
- International flavor
  - S. America, Asia, Oceania

Project: Inventory of montane-nesting birds in national parks of northwest Alaska

Investigators: Lee Tibbitts, Robert Gill, Dan Ruthrauff, and Colleen Handel, U.S. Geological Survey

Between 26 May and 10 June 2003, we completed the third and final field season allocated for an inventory of montane-nesting birds in Alaska's Arctic Network of national parks (Cape Krusenstern National Monument, Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve, Kobuk Valley National Park, and Noatak National Preserve). Because these parks are thought to provide important nesting habitat for several montane-nesting shorebirds, our surveys were designed to focus on this group, but all avian species were recorded. We conducted up to 24 point counts in each of 20 study plots in 2001 (5 plots in Cape Krusenstern, 15 in Noatak), 22 plots in 2002 (8 in Kobuk, 14 in Noatak), and 28 plots in 2003 (1 in Kobuk Valley, 6 in Noatak, and 21 in Gates of the Arctic). Plots were 10 x 10 km in size and randomly selected. Points within plots were spaced at least 500 m apart along transects and allocated in proportion to available topography and habitat (i.e., ecoregion). At each point, we conducted a 10-minute count of shorebirds and potential predators, followed by a 5-minute count for all other birds. These totaled 276 hours of actual survey time for shorebirds and 137 hours for other species. We recorded 2,044 shorebirds and potential predators during the 10-minute counts and 5,330 birds during the 5-min counts. A total of 115 species of birds was detected on the plots both on and off surveys (53 in Cape Krusenstern, 57 in Kobuk Valley, 91 in Noatak, and 96 in Gates of the Arctic). This included 23 species of shorebirds and 14 species of potential predators of shorebirds or their eggs or young. The most commonly detected shorebirds and potential shorebird predators (expressed as average occurrence per point) over the three years were American Golden-Plover (0.19), Wilson's Snipe (0.17), Whimbrel (0.15), Long-tailed Jaeger (0.10), and Common Raven (0.25). The overall plot diversity (total number of species encountered during two-day plot visit) was highest in coastal Cape Krusenstern (30.4 ± 2.2 SD), with slightly fewer species recorded in the three more interior parks (Kobuk Valley, 25.4 ± 3.5; Gates of the Arctic, 25.8 ± 9.1; Noatak, 25.6 ± 5.6). A more detailed summary can be found at:
http://www1.nature.nps.gov/im/units/AKRO/Fieldnotes/Fieldnotes.htm

We are currently analyzing data from the inventory and will have a final report completed later in 2004. Also in this year, we will initiate a multi-year inventory of Alaska's southwest network of national parks with Lake Clark National Park and Preserve scheduled to be surveyed in May.

Contact: Lee Tibbitts, Alaska Science Center, U.S. Geological Survey, 1011 E. Tudor Road, Anchorage, Alaska 99503. Phone: (907) 786-3340; email: lee_tibbitts@usgs.gov.

Project: Arctic PRISM: a test of the intensive survey method

Investigator: Richard Lanctot, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

In 2003, the Barrow Shorebird Camp participated in a multi-site international effort to test some of the assumptions inherent in the Program for Regional and International Shorebird Monitoring (PRISM). Other camps were located in Alaska on the Yukon Delta NWR (see report by B. McCaffery) and the Arctic NWR, and in Canada at East Bay, Southampton Island, and Dewey Soper Game Sanctuary, Baffin Island.

Arctic PRISM relies on a double-sampling protocol for estimating the population sizes and trends of tundra-breeding shorebirds. One assumption of this approach is that all (or nearly all) items of interest (e.g., territorial males, nests) are located on a sample of intensively surveyed plots. The study design provides for independent searches of the same plots by different intensive surveyors, as well as by an independently operating rope-dragging crew, to estimate both the proportion of discovered nests missed by one or more observers, and to estimate the actual number of nests on the plots.

Like at the Kanaryarmiut Field Station on the Yukon Delta NWR, we established four 16-ha survey plots. These 400 x 400-m plots were located in the middle of our 600 x 600-m plots used in the demography study (see below). We relied on four observers that intensively surveyed two plots each, resulting in two different surveyors independently searching for nests on each of the four plots. These same observers also served on rope-drag teams that searched for nests on plots that they were not already searching (two people/rope-drag team). In addition, there were two people banding birds at nests found by other observers. The banding team also searched for nests opportunistically. Thus we had two observers and a rope-drag team searching for nests independently and a fourth "all-knowing" team that was also searching for nests. Over a 22-day period spanning the peak of laying, observers visited each plot six times, and spent 48 hours per plot searching for nests. The rope-drag team visited each plot for a 6- to 8-hr period 3 times over a 16-day period. The banding team had no preset schedule for visiting plots, but rather went where they were needed to successfully capture incubating adults. Information collected by the banders, however, proved very useful for locating nests not discovered by the other teams and for determining when nests were active.

A total of 34 nests was found on the four plots by one of the 3 independent search teams, including 19 nests of Red Phalarope, 10 Dunlin, 1 Red-necked Phalarope, 1 American Golden-Plover, and 1 Semipalmated Sandpiper. Five additional nests—three Long-billed Dowitcher, one Dunlin, and one Pectoral Sandpiper—were not detected by either the independent observers or the rope-drag team. These included two nests that were only detected after eggs hatched and alarming adult and chicks were found (despite being active during the survey period); two other nests found only by the banding team; and one nest that was initiated after the survey period. The percentage of the total nests discovered by any one observer on any one plot ranged from 33 to 80%. Across all plots, the four individual surveyors discovered between 43.5 and 75.0% of all documented nests. These values are considerably lower than the percentages reported on the Yukon Delta NWR (see beyond). The Barrow data may reflect less frequent visits to plots,

Project: Shorebird Sister Schools Program: workshop summary, 2003 Northwest Territories Teacher Conference, Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, Canada, November 27–28, 2003

Investigator: Tamara Mills, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The Shorebird Sister Schools Program (SSSP) is an internet-based environmental education program that connects students, educators, biologists, and birding enthusiasts along migratory flyways. The three key components included a curriculum (grades 2–12), an e-mail network, and a web site. Partnerships with numerous organizations, schools, volunteer birders, and youth groups make this program possible. The shear magnitude of what shorebirds accomplish in their seasonal migrations is truly amazing and a great tie into numerous subjects like math, geography, social studies, the arts, and writing. The lessons in the SSSP curricula also teach a broad range of scientific concepts and offer a global connection to other students, scientists, and educators.

Northern Canada—Nunavut and Northwest Territories (NWT)—is an important area for many shorebirds. These amazing migrants often stop to rest and feed in the lower latitudes of this region en route to nesting areas in the arctic and high arctic portions of Canada. By learning about shorebirds and the habitats these birds rely on, students can participate in hands-on conservation and help protect entire ecosystems and natural areas on which all flora and fauna depend.

Two, full-day (repeated) workshops were offered to introduce primary and secondary school teachers from NWT to the SSSP. The workshops were attended by a total of five educators with varying backgrounds ranging from a business and accounting teacher to a substitute teacher with a geography degree. All participants seemed highly interested in the program and were eager to learn. Participants were provided an introduction to shorebird biology and local species identification, went on a curriculum "scavenger hunt," turned a fellow teacher into a "shorebird," explored the SSSP website, and went on a virtual field trip.

Posters, student activity guides, and SSSP brochures were provided to all participants. A copy of the current *Arctic Nesting Shorebirds* curriculum will be sent to each participant and a CD with the new curriculum *Explore the World of Shorebirds* will be sent when completed in February 2004. Each participant completed an evaluation of the workshop.

The small number of participants presented both challenges and opportunities. For example, several activities are hands-on and interactive (i.e., the curriculum scavenger hunt) and thus better suited for large groups. On the other hand, the small number of participants provided an intimate and enjoyable atmosphere and enabled me to answer questions and provide ideas specific to each educator's needs.

Contact: Tamara Mills, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1011 E. Tudor Road, Anchorage, AK. Phone: (907) 786-3517; email: tamara_mills@fws.gov.

locations were previously undocumented. A single return visit was conducted to each identified nest to evaluate apparent nest success. We also conducted a series of flight surveys to collect data on human use in the same areas inventoried for oystercatchers. The information collected during these initial inventories will help in the selection of index sites for future oystercatcher population monitoring as well as refine information on habitat associations and the potential for human disturbance of nesting grounds.

Contact: Aaron J. Poe, Wildlife Biologist, U.S. Forest Service, Glacier Ranger District, Chugach National Forest, Girdwood, Alaska 99587. Phone: (907) 754-2345; email: apoe@fs.fed.us.

Project: Breeding biology, chick growth and provisioning, and paternity of the Black Oystercatcher on Middleton Island, Alaska

Investigators: Brian Guzetti, University of Alaska, Fairbanks; Verena Gill, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Douglas Schamel, University of Alaska, Fairbanks

We summarize here a proposed project that will begin in spring 2004.

Black Oystercatchers are listed as a species of high concern within the United States and Canadian shorebird conservation plans. Despite the overall low population size and general decline, the oystercather is doing exceptionally well on Middleton Island, Alaska, where the population has grown from 2 birds in 1976 to more than 700 in 2001. The high nesting success and nesting density of oystercatchers residing on this mostly predator-free island, provide a unique opportunity to examine chick growth rates, chick provisioning, and genetic paternity near the northern limit of this species' breeding range. Our banding and blood-collection program will also help document mate and site fidelity of adults, assess the degree of chick philopatry, as well as lay the foundation for a future population genetics study. We will capture adults using a variety of methods, and band them for individual recognition. About 100 microliters of blood will be taken from all adults and chicks banded. Nests will be monitored for adult attendance every five days; chicks will be weighed and measured every five days; and provisioning rates will be estimated using focal bird observations on a five-day rotation. Paternity will be determined using microsatellites. We predict that extra-pair fertilizations will be more prevalent in areas of high nesting density. We further predict that provisioning should be greater for first-hatched chicks, and that their growth rates should be higher than for later-hatched chicks. Data collected in this study should prove useful for understanding factors affecting fledging success in a potential "source" population for this species.

Contact: Brian Guzett, Department of Biology and Wildlife, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Fairbanks, AK 99775. Email: shoobadedo@hotmail.com; Verena Gill, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1011 E. Tudor Road, Anchorage, AK 99503. Phone: (907) 786-3584; email: verena_gill@fws.gov.

National Park increased from 6.9/ha on 17 January 2003 to 12.6/ha on 23 February 2003. A similar pattern, with overall lower densities, was observed at Ilha da Torotama. At Taim Ecological Station, however, the density of birds over this same period plummeted from 14.9/ha to 0/ha. These changes in density suggest the first two sites may act as staging areas and the latter site as a nonbreeding area for Buff-breasted Sandpipers. Nineteen females and six males were captured and color marked, of which five females and one male were also radio-marked. Based on resightings, the average length of residence time was 4 ± 2.7 days ($\pm$ SE) for two color-marked and four radio-marked sandpipers. From a small sample of birds captured in December 2003, the between-year site fidelity at Taim Ecological Station was only 6.7%. Based on captures of mostly females, sandpipers had nearly completed wing molt and replaced about half of their tail feathers by the end of January. Changes in body mass differed between sexes, with males losing and females gaining mass throughout the study period. Small sample sizes and differences in migration timing between sexes are possible explanations for observed differences in these trends. Additional fieldwork encompassing the entire nonbreeding season (October–March) is necessary to understand spatial use patterns within sites, as well as to obtain seasonal trends of body mass and molt. Two more field seasons are planned, with the second beginning in October 2003.

Contact: Juliana Almeida, Ecology, Evolution and Conservation Biology, Univ. of Nevada Reno, Reno, NV 89557. Phone: (775) 784-6393; email: jalmeida@unr.nevada.edu.

Project: Conservation of Dunlins in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway

Investigators: Yoshi Shigeta, Yamashina Institute for Ornithology; Kent Wohl and Richard Lanctot, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; and Robert Gill, U.S. Geological Survey

Among the 10 recognized subspecies of Dunlin, 5 breed in the North Pacific region (*arcticola, pacifica, sakhalina, kistchinskii,* and *actites*). During the nonbreeding season the species regularly occurs along the coast of the North Pacific, but genetic studies, which indicate considerable mixing of populations, need further assessment. North Pacific Dunlins are excellent candidates for an international cooperative project for at least three reasons. First, local counts throughout both nonbreeding and breeding areas indicate that some populations are declining. Second, wetlands in Japan, Korean Peninsula (Republic of Korea and People's Democratic Republic of Korea), Republic of China (Taiwan), and eastern People's Republic of China (China) are under grave threats from development activities. For instance, in China alone over 800 km^2 of intertidal wetlands were reclaimed between 1987 and 1998. In perspective, this is over twice the amount of similar habitat that occurs along the coast of the central Yukon Delta. Establishing the international importance of nonbreeding habitats and identifying the breeding areas of populations that use these habitats will aid in conservation of these wetlands. Third, the U. S. Shorebird Conservation Plan places high priority on monitoring shorebird numbers and assumes that northern nesting species will be monitored primarily at staging, stopover, or nonbreeding sites.

Heretofore, a relatively small number of observations of marked birds has linked northern Alaska Dunlin (*arcticola* subspecies) to nonbreeding areas in East Asia (Japan, Korean Peninsula,

It's a Who's Doing What on Shorebirds in Alaska!

- I'd like to see similar report for landbirds
- One-half- to one-page summaries of ALL landbird work done
- Highlights what we've done…in the field, office exercises, conference presentations, etc.
- But also demonstrates holes
- Should include appended list of published landbird work…even gray literature
- There would be link on website

Compilation needs:

- Compiler/editor (I'll do it if Gabrielson and Lincoln are not interested)
- Whip-cracker ("Where's the @#$%~!#$%^ summary you promised us??!!")
- Secret project sniffer-outer czar…must have working knowledge at infiltration of academia (Who the heck knew someone was working on Yellow-bellied Flycatcher?)

Is COB this Friday too early for summary submission deadline???